

HOME to Reading. That's the dream draw which came out of the hat for Wycombe Wanderers yesterday (Monday) at the F.A.'s Lancaster Gate headquarters. And on all counts, the Blues could hardly have wished for a more attractive tie in the second round of the F.A. Cup on December 11.

Third Division Reading is only 20 or so miles from Wycombe and a bumper crowd at Loakes Park is assured. The club committee meet this week to decide whether to make the tie all ticket and to also consider a crowd limit.

Apart from the financial bonus from the draw, Wanderers must consider themselves to be in with

more than a chance of reaching the magical third round—a feat they achieved two years ago when they drew Middlesbrough. That was the first time the club reached round three in their 90 year history.

Surprisingly, this is the first time the two teams have met in the F.A. Cup, although Reading have come up against several non-league clubs in recent years.

Wanderers, with the vital bonus of a home draw, will be encouraged by Reading's performance in the last round against Southern League club, Wealdstone. Reading only managed a 1-0 triumph and Wealdstone were reduced to nine men as two were sent off for bad fouls in a stormy game. Arnold and Fursdon were the two offenders while John Murray was the goalscorer after a Robin Friday shot had been blocked on the line.

A crowd of 5,791 was at Elm Park for the game and as

the Wycombe tie is only a short distance away, a figure of something in excess of 10,000 is on the cards at Loakes Park on December 11.

Reading are currently going through a lean spell after winning promotion from the Fourth Division last season. Among their results in Division Three are a 4-1 win over Swindon at home and a 1-1 draw at Crystal Palace but Reading have taken only three points from their last eight games.

They retained nearly all the playing personnel from last season and signed defender Paul Bennett from Southampton for an £8,000 fee. Among the squad are long serving goalkeeper Steve Death while Reading have plenty of experience in midfield and up front. Their forwards are John Murray, Robin Friday and Ray Hiron. Friday joined them from Wycombe's fellow Isthmian League side Hayes and has scored many valuable

goals for the club. Hiron, a 6ft-plus target man, had a long spell with Portsmouth.

Reading are managed by Charlie Hurley, who has been in charge for five years at Elm Park. He said on hearing the draw: "This will be a tough game—they all are away from home. We will probably have to play better than we did against Wealdstone on Saturday but we have seen Wycombe two or three times this season on scouting missions."

Reading's scouts were looking for players at Loakes Park earlier in the season, particularly Ian Pearson, but no offers were made.

Manager Hurley must be worried about the thought of meeting non-league opposition again. Last season Reading made an early exit from the F.A. Cup at Hendon, where they lost 1-0. The goalscorer was the centre half, Alan Phillips, now back with Wycombe.

Alan will therefore have a good knowledge of

Wanderers' Cup opponents. Blues manager Ted Powell while the Blues are sure to have representatives at Reading's next home match on the 11th and I think we stand against York on December 4. This week they are away to Tranmere on Friday evening. In past years Reading have struggled against non-league clubs. In 1967 Dagenham held them 1-1 at Elm Park before losing the replay while in 1969 they lost 1-0 at Brentwood. They made no mistake in '70 against Bishop's Stortford, whom they thrashed 6-1. The next year they were held to a 2-2 draw at Blyth Spartans but won the replay 6-1.

Hayes also gave Reading a few headaches three years ago when they held them to a goalless draw at Elm Park but Reading took the replay 1-0 at Church Road. That year Reading went on to reach the fourth round before going down to the eventual F.A. Cup winners Sunderland 3-0 at home.

Reading came up against Slough in 1973-74 and beat them 3-0 with Geoff Anthony, the former Wycombe winger, playing in the Rebels side.

With recent performances in mind, Wanderers must be confident of getting through to the third round. Their performance on Saturday at Waterlooville will stand them in good stead for the Reading confrontation and took their record to seven games without defeat in league and cup.

We can be sure of a big crowd deal about Reading at the moment but I have played there several times. We know about Robin Friday, of course, from his days at Hayes."

Reading's results this season: Division 3: Gillingham away 2-0, Shrewsbury away lost 0-2, Walsall home 2-1, Wrexham home 2-0, Northampton away 2-0, Peterborough away lost 1-2, Port Vale home 1-1, Portsmouth away 2-0, Swindon home 4-1, Chesterfield away lost 0-4, Sheffield Wednesday home lost 0-1, Lincoln away lost 1-3, Chester home 2-0, Brighton home lost 2-3, Crystal Palace away 1-1, Mansfield away lost 0-4, Preston home lost 0-2.